UNSTEADY OUTPUT-BASED ADAPTIVE SIMULATION OF SEPARATED AND TRANSITIONAL FLOWS

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UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN ANN ARBOR

03/19/2015
Final Report

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

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1. REPORT DATE *(DD-MM-YYYY)*	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED *(From - To)*
31-03-2015	Final	15/05/2011 -- 14/12/2014

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE
(YIP 2011) UNSTEADY OUTPUT-BASED ADAPTIVE SIMULATION OF SEPARATED AND TRANSITIONAL FLOWS

5a. CONTRACT NUMBER

5b. GRANT NUMBER
FA9550-11-1-0081

5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER

6. AUTHOR(S)
Fidkowski, Krzysztof, J.

5d. PROJECT NUMBER

5e. TASK NUMBER

5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)
The Regents of the University of Michigan
University of Michigan, ORSP
3003 South State Street
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1274

8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER

9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)
AFOSR/RSL
875 North Randolph Street
Suite 325, Room 3112
Arlington, VA 22203

10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)
AFOSR

11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)

12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Approval for public release; distribution is unlimited.

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

14. ABSTRACT
The goal of this project was to investigate and overcome the difficulties of extending output-based error estimation and mesh adaptation from steady to unsteady simulations of aerodynamics problems relevant to the U.S. Air Force. These methods have a direct impact on robustness, through estimates of numerical error on engineering outputs, and efficiency, through space-time mesh adaptive methodology, of unsteady simulations. The project led to significant advances in adjoint-based error estimates for large-scale, nonlinear, time-dependent problems on deformable domains, and in their use in driving efficient combined space-time mesh refinement. The methods were applied to several transient aerodynamics problems, culminating with a three-dimensional adaptive flapping-wing simulation. Approaches for reducing the cost of the methods were also investigated, including a hybridized discontinuous Galerkin discretization and entropy-adjoint unsteady error estimates. The findings were disseminated in a variety of presentations, conference proceedings, and archival journal publications.

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16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT	b. ABSTRACT	c. THIS PAGE			Dr. Krzysztof J. Fidkowski
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Final Report

(YIP 2011) UNSTEADY OUTPUT-BASED ADAPTIVE SIMULATION OF SEPARATED AND TRANSITIONAL FLOWS

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March 17, 2015

Abstract

The goal of this project was to investigate and overcome the difficulties of extending output-based error estimation and mesh adaptation from steady to unsteady simulations of aerodynamics problems relevant to the U.S. Air Force. These methods have a direct impact on robustness, through estimates of numerical error on engineering outputs, and efficiency, through space-time mesh adaptive methodology, of unsteady simulations. The project led to significant advances in adjoint-based error estimates for large-scale, nonlinear, time-dependent problems on deformable domains, and in their use in driving efficient combined space-time mesh refinement. The methods were applied to several transient aerodynamics problems, culminating with a three-dimensional adaptive flapping-wing simulation. Approaches for reducing the cost of the methods were also investigated, including a hybridized discontinuous Galerkin discretization and entropy-adjoint unsteady error estimates. The findings were disseminated in a variety of presentations, conference proceedings, and archival journal publications.

1 Introduction

Numerical error is inherent to unsteady Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) due to the finite nature of computation. To the extent that this error is not quantified, unsteady CFD simulations are not robust: using possibly-inaccurate results in a broader context such as design bears risk. As computations are performed with limited resources, of additional interest is efficiency, which is determined by the cost of a satisfactory solution. For complex unsteady applications, both spatial and temporal resolution are expected to have important effects on numerical error.

Quantification of this error is a difficult task for practitioners, even those with expert judgment. Standard error quantification techniques such as convergence studies are not always possible under resource constraints and can depend on the initial spatial and temporal resolutions. More robust are direct a posteriori estimates of the output error, which can also provide adaptive indicators for mesh refinement. This research developed practical output error estimates and mesh adaptation strategies for unsteady flows, with specific application to aerodynamics problems relevant to the Air Force.

2 Objectives

The goal of this research was to improve the robustness and efficiency of unsteady aerodynamics simulations by developing an output-based space-time adaptive methodology. The approach centered on unsteady discrete adjoint-based output error estimates for improving robustness and space-time adaptive mesh refinement for improving efficiency. The specific objectives were as follows:

- To investigate suitable error measures for unsteady simulations, including engineering output error and surrogate heuristics.
- To extend adjoint-based error estimation theory to unsteady simulations in a rigorous space-time variational setting.
- To implement an output error estimation procedure in a discontinuous Galerkin space-time finite element discretization.
- To develop space-time mesh adaptation mechanics for large-scale unsteady applications.
- To demonstrate the proposed error control framework for a target three-dimensional application problem.

To accomplish these objectives, the research was divided into three thrusts: high-order discretization, unsteady error estimation, and combined spatial/temporal mesh adaptation.

3 Accomplishments

During the period of performance of this award, we made multiple advances in the proposed research objectives related to unsteady output error estimation and mesh adaptation. The following sections outline the key contributions with references to relevant publications.

3.1 High-Order Finite Element Methods

Requirements of high accuracy in unsteady aerodynamics motivated the grounding of our research in high-order spatial and temporal discretizations. The discretization used, the discontinuous Galerkin (DG) finite-element method, was chosen because it offers several key advantages: it is unstructured, locally conservative, high-order accurate, stable for convection-dominated flows, low in dissipation and dispersion, optimally convergent, and amenable to hp refinement. To make DG more robust for the chosen application problems, we developed a constrained pseudo-transient continuation solver [1, 5, 7] that enabled us to simulate challenging cases such as those in the drag-prediction workshop [6] and the international workshop on high-order CFD methods [17].

While most of our work was performed using DG, towards the end of the award we recognized that DG methods are consistently computationally expensive: a discontinuous high-order approximation in multiple dimensions creates a large number of coupled degrees of freedom per element. This shortcoming of DG motivated the transition of some of our research to hybridized DG (HDG) methods [9, 8] late in the award. Figure 1 illustrates the primary differences between DG and
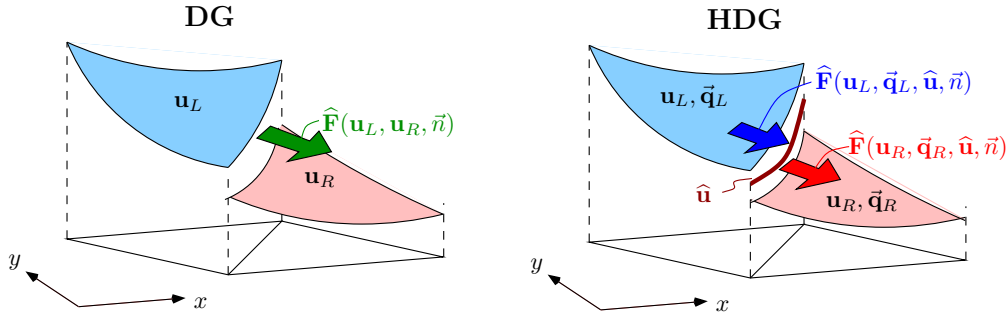

Figure 1: In the HDG method, additional unknowns on element interfaces allow elimination of the element-interior unknowns. This results in a global system in which the number of unknowns scales as $p^{\dim-1}$ instead of $p^{\dim}$ for DG.

HDG, namely the introduction of additional degrees of freedom on faces that decouple elements from each other and yield a global system of smaller size at high order compared to DG. HDG also boasts optimal convergence of the gradient and a potential local postprocessing technique for superconvergent solution reconstruction.

During the award period, we added new capabilities to an in-house high-order finite-element library that was originally founded on DG. This library now supports both DG and HDG in the same framework. That is, the DG and HDG implementations share functions related to integration, residual calculation and linearization, and physics; the only differences is in short high-level functions that decide which weak-form terms contribute to the residual. Other discretizations, such as the embedded discontinuous Galerkin (EDG) will now be easy to introduce in future work. Research efforts supported by this code included: robustness improvements for the Reynolds-averaged Navier-Stokes (RANS) equations needed for the application problems; anisotropic h and p refinement for three-dimensional configurations; adaptive mesh motion using an ALE formulation; and efficiency and stability investigations with HDG. Figure 2 shows a sample comparison of adaptive runs using DG and HDG, with the result for this case that at high order, HDG indeed becomes more efficient than DG.
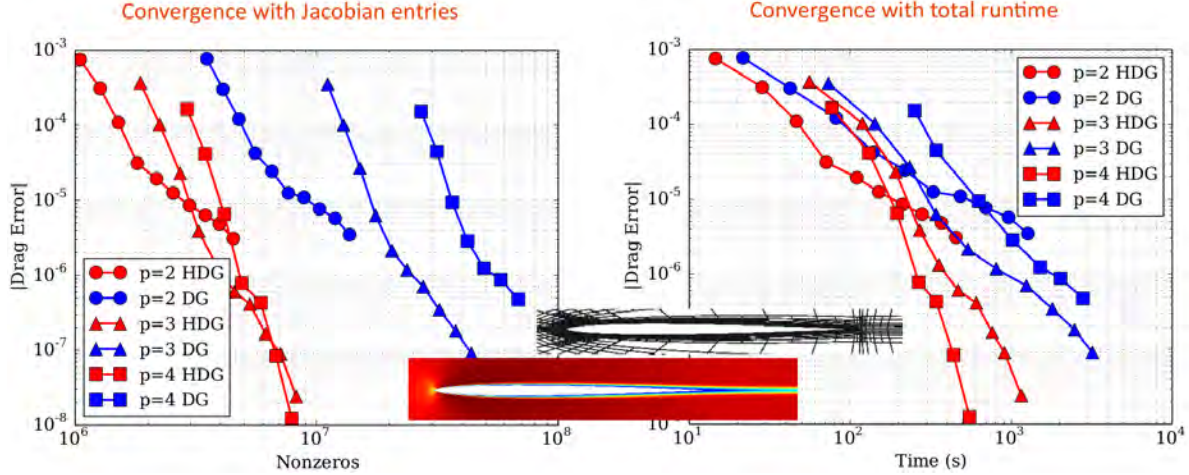
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Figure 2: . Adaptive simulations of laminar viscous flow over a NACA 0004 airfoil at $M = 0.5$, $Re = 50,000$. A comparison of DG and HDG discretizations indicates a benefit of using HDG, especially at higher approximation orders.

3.2 Error Estimation and Adaptation for Steady-State RANS Flows

As a precursor to unsteady problems, in the early part of this award we verified our steady-state RANS error estimates and adaptive mesh refinement, and we extended them to complex three-dimensional problems in preparation for the unsteady application. The key added adaptive capability was hp-refinement of quadrilateral and hexahedral meshes in two and three dimensions using a discrete-choice optimization approach [2, 3]. This required anisotropy detection through element-patch-local sampling of refinement options and a unified output-error driven selection procedure for combined p and anisotropic-h refinement options. We demonstrated the results on large three-dimensional wing and wing-body configurations, using the RANS equations. A sample steady adaptive result is illustrated in Figure 3, which shows a test case from the fifth Drag Prediction Workshop organized by the American Institute for Aeronautics and Astronautics in 2012 [4, 6]. The case involved predicting the drag on an aircraft (wing-body) at transonic cruise flight conditions. Figure 3 shows results obtained using our hp-adaptive capability, driven by drag error estimates. Note that the output error estimates shown in Figure 3b serve as numerical error bars that improve solution robustness. Towards the end of the award, we extended our error estimation and adaptation framework to simulations requiring output trim constraints [16]. This effort also built on our mesh motion capabilities developed as part of this award and discussed in Section 3.4.

3.3 Output-Based Adaptive Space-Time Methods

Whereas output-based adaptive methods are becoming fairly mature for steady problems, unsteady applications are less common because they pose challenges in the cost of error estimates and in the complexity of adaptive mechanics. As part of this grant, we extended our error estimation and adaptation methods from steady-state to unsteady simulations. Relevant contributions include:

- Combined temporal and spatial mesh h-refinement with a static geometry and mesh [12].
- Static and dynamic spatial order refinement on static geometries [15, 10].
- Combined temporal and dynamic-order spatial refinement on deformable domains [14].
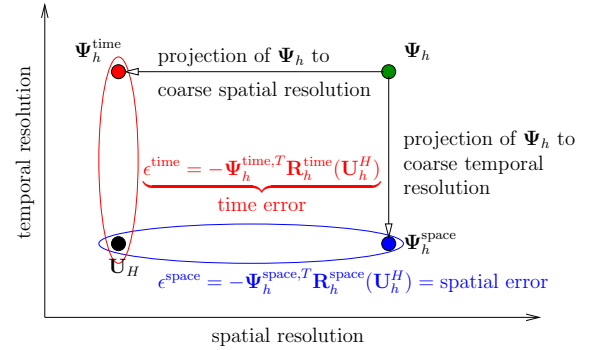
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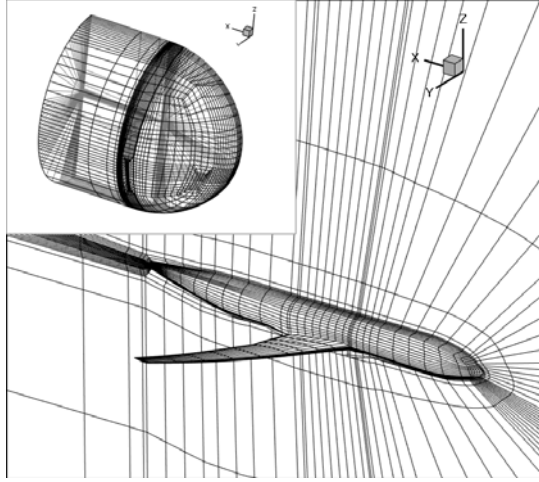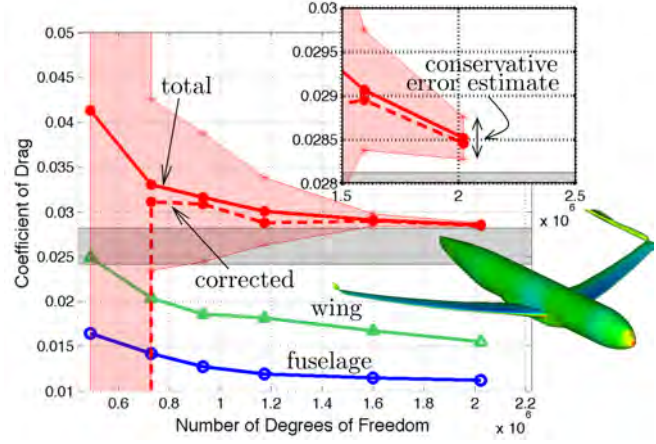
| (a) Initial mesh | (b) Convergence of the drag output |

Figure 3: Adaptive results for the wing body Common Research Model (CRM), the subject of the fifth AIAA Drag Prediction Workshop. Results were obtained using steady output-based hp refinement capabilities of an in-house (UM) discontinuous Galerkin finite element code.

This work employed a space-time discontinuous Galerkin finite element discretization using time slabs and an approximate space-time solver [12]. For nonlinear problems, the adjoint system at each adaptive iteration is solved backwards in time using primal states saved from the forward run. Figure 4(a) shows a schematic of this process. Primal checkpointing was not needed for any of the runs but could be implemented if needed in the future. An important contribution to adaptive efficiency was in the form of a space-time anisotropy measure using projection of the fine adjoint to semi-refined spaces, illustrated in Figure 4(b). This enabled decisions of whether spatial or temporal refinement would most efficiently reduce the output error on a space-time element.
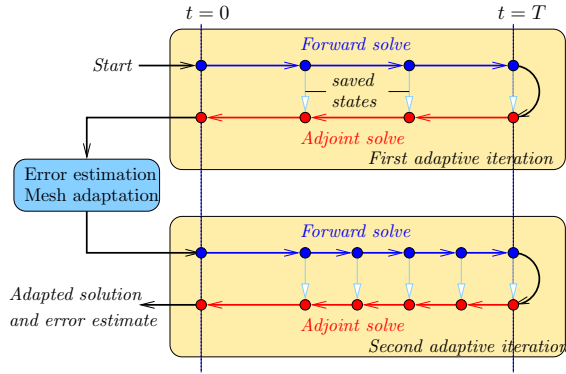
| (a) Unsteady output-based adaptive solution process | (b) Space-time anisotropy via semi-refined spaces |

Figure 4: Schematic of an adaptive primal and adjoint solution procedure for output-based unsteady simulations. Decisions of refinement in space and time are driven by an anisotropy measure that projects a fine-space adjoint down to semi-refined spaces.

Using this anisotropy measure, we investigated several adaptive schemes, including time slab bisection, time node redistribution, static h spatial mesh refinement, and static/dynamic spatial order refinement. Figure 5 shows a static h refinement result for a laminar vortex shedding simula-

tion [12]: output-based refinement beats uniform and heuristic refinements in degrees of freedom for a strict error tolerance, and it comes equipped with an error estimate.
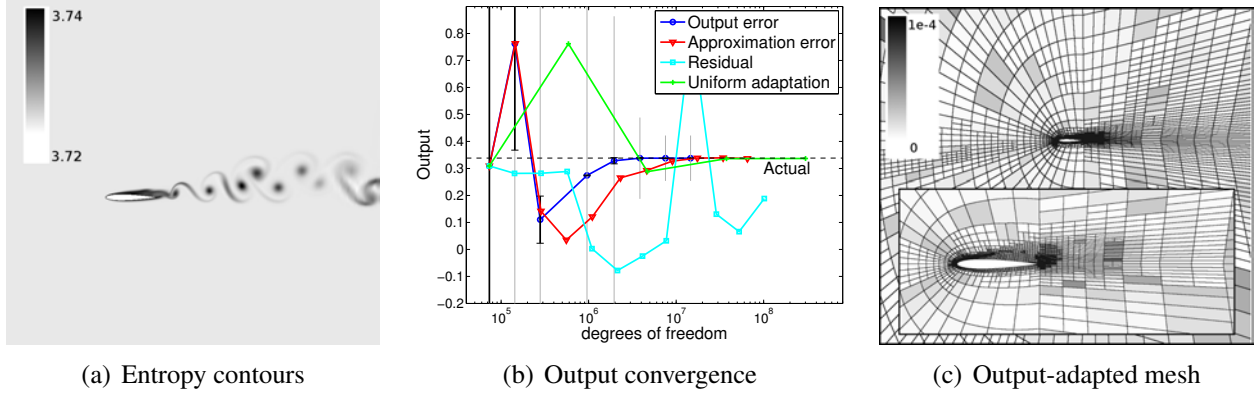

(a) Entropy contours
(b) Output convergence
(c) Output-adapted mesh

Figure 5: Unsteady output-adaptive result for a laminar vortex shedding simulation using static spatial meshes and DG discretizations in space and time; comparisons show performance versus other, heuristic, indicators.

3.4 Deformable Domains

In addition to unsteady problems on fixed domains, we also considered domains deforming due to motion, such as that induced by flapping. These simulations have far-reaching applications, from bio-inspired flight to aircraft maneuver and flutter analysis. The runs are generally computationally intensive and the resulting solutions are often rich in features.

During the award period, we implemented unsteady mesh-motion capability into our solver and extended our output-based theory and methods to problems involving deformable domains. The mesh motion was performed using an arbitrary Lagrangian-Eulerian (ALE) formulation, illustrated in Figure 6. In this formulation, error estimation and adaptation are done on the static reference space. As such, much of the output-based theory carries over in a straightforward manner. The
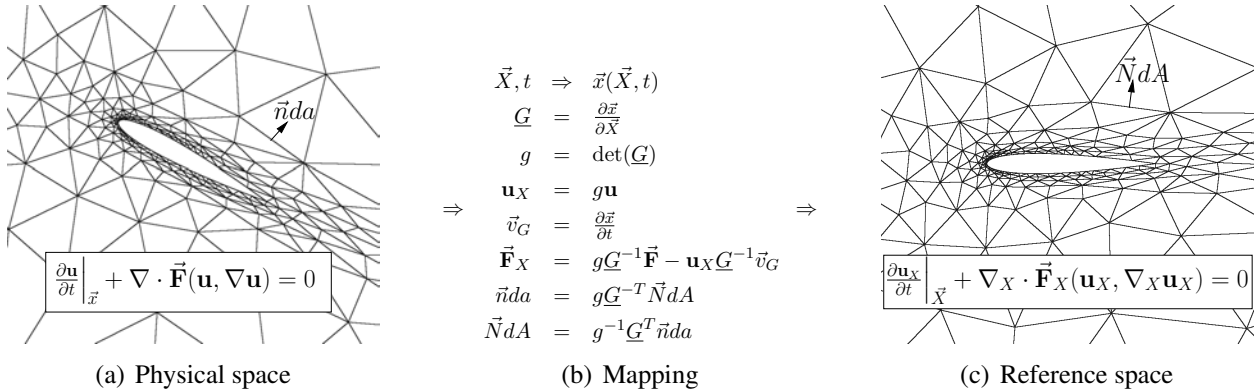

$$\begin{aligned}
\vec{X}, t &\Rightarrow \vec{x}(\vec{X}, t) \\
\underline{G} &= \frac{\partial \vec{x}}{\partial \vec{X}} \\
g &= \det(\underline{G}) \\
\mathbf{u}_X &= g\mathbf{u} \\
\vec{v}_G &= \frac{\partial \vec{x}}{\partial t} \\
\mathbf{F}_X &= g\underline{G}^{-1}\mathbf{F} - \mathbf{u}_X\underline{G}^{-1}\vec{v}_G \\
\vec{n}da &= g\underline{G}^{-T}\vec{N}dA \\
\vec{N}dA &= g^{-1}\underline{G}^{T}\vec{n}da
\end{aligned}$$

(a) Physical space
(b) Mapping
(c) Reference space

Figure 6: Arbitrary Lagrangian Eulerian mapping used for simulations on deforming domains. Error estimation and adaptation is done on the transformed equations in reference space.

geometric conservation law (GCL) does require special attention for the adjoint solve, error estimate, and adaptive indicator, and we studied the effect of the GCL in our works [13, 14]. Figure 7
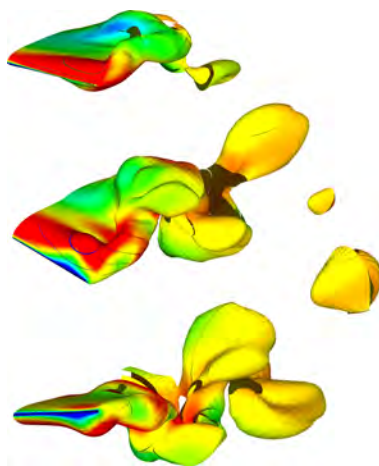
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shows dynamic-order adaptive results for two- and three-dimensional problems with mesh motion. Output-based refinement clearly beats uniform order refinement and dynamic order refinement driven by a residual indicator. In our implementation, this advantage also extends to computational time.
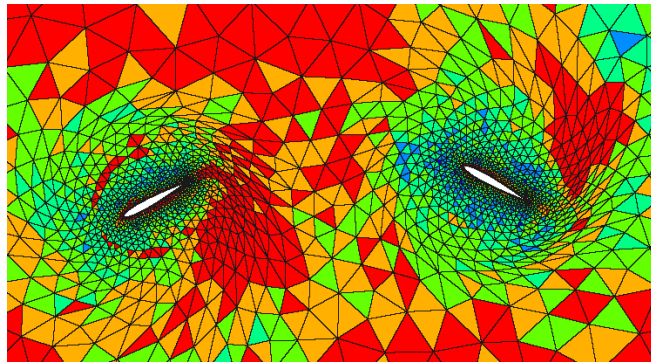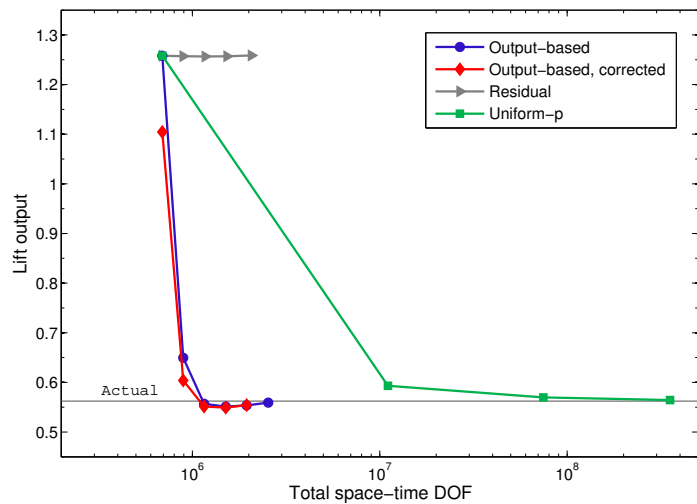

(a) 2D order snapshot
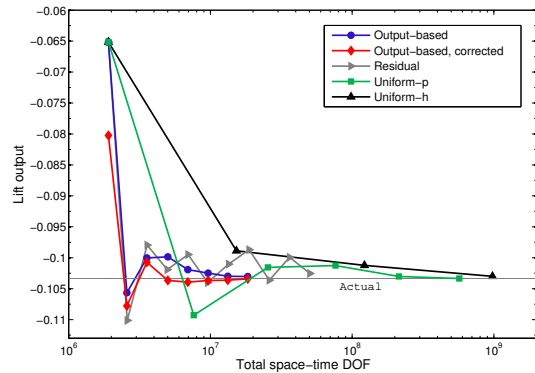
(b) 2D output convergence

(c) 3D solution snapshots

(d) 3D output convergence

Figure 7: Comparison of output-based and heuristic space-time refinement strategies for a two-dimensional problem with staggered airfoils and a three-dimensional wing undergoing prescribed flapping motion [14]. In both cases, the output is a lift coefficient at/near the final time of the simulation.

3.5 The Entropy Adjoint Indicator

The entropy adjoint technique for steady-state adaptation was introduced in collaborative work prior to this award. The key idea behind this approach is that readily available entropy variables are in fact adjoint solutions for an entropy balance output, and adapting on an indicator computed from this cheap adjoint targets areas of spurious entropy generation. Work under the AFOSR project elucidated connections to output-based drag adaptation [11] and extended the technique to unsteady problems [15] in a variational space-time setting. Figure 8 shows an adaptive unsteady simulation of the shallow water equations using DG in space and time: the entropy adjoint in-

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dicator yields an error convergence plot most similar to the engineering-output (force) indicator. This result shows that we can significantly reduce the cost of unsteady output-based adaptation. Though the output is specific to an entropy balance, we have found that for many problems, areas of spurious entropy generation correlate with areas important for engineering outputs.
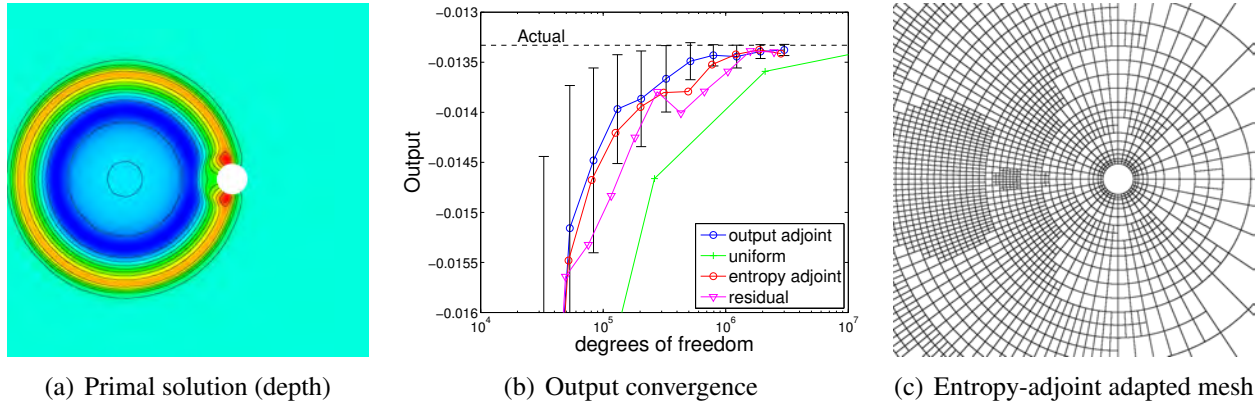

(a) Primal solution (depth) (b) Output convergence (c) Entropy-adjoint adapted mesh

Figure 8: Adaptive refinement of a 2D shallow-water equation simulation using an entropy adjoint indicator: performance is nearly identical to an output-based method, which requires a separate, backwards-in-time adjoint calculation.

4 Acknowledgment/Disclaimer

5 Personnel Supported

Krzysztof Fidkowski	Principal Investigator	Aerospace Eng.	U. Michigan
Marco Ceze	Ph.D. student/postdoctoral associate	Aerospace Eng.	U. Michigan
Steven Kast	Ph.D. student	Aerospace Eng.	U. Michigan
Benjamin Rothacker	Ph.D. student	Aerospace Eng.	U. Michigan
Loc Khieu	Postdoctoral associate	Aerospace Eng.	U. Michigan
Derek Dalle	Postdoctoral associate	Aerospace Eng.	U. Michigan

6 Publications

The publications resulting from this work are the complete set listed in the references section, 7.

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(YIP 2011) UNSTEADY OUTPUT-BASED ADAPTIVE SIMULATION OF SEPARATED AND TRANSITIONAL FLOWS

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FA9550-11-1-0081

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Dr. Fariba Fahroo

Reporting Period Start Date

05/15/2011

Reporting Period End Date

12/14/2014

Abstract

The goal of this project was to investigate and overcome the difficulties of extending output-based error estimation and mesh adaptation from steady to unsteady simulations of aerodynamics problems relevant to the U.S. Air Force. These methods have a direct impact on robustness, through estimates of numerical error on engineering outputs, and efficiency, through space-time mesh adaptive methodology, of unsteady simulations. The project led to significant advances in adjoint-based error estimates for large-scale, nonlinear, time-dependent problems on deformable domains, and in their use in driving efficient combined space-time mesh refinement. The methods were applied to several transient aerodynamics problems, culminating with a three-dimensional adaptive flapping-wing simulation. Approaches for reducing the cost of the methods were also investigated, including a hybridized discontinuous Galerkin discretization and entropy-adjoint unsteady error estimates. During the course of the project, we made the following accomplishments: (1) We developed a constrained pseudo-transient continuation solver to make the discontinuous Galerkin (DG) method more robust for the chosen application

problems; (2) we applied output-based methods to the novel hybridized discontinuous Galerkin (HDG) method; (3) we developed an hp-adaptive framework based on discrete choice optimization for quadrilateral and hexahedral elements; (4) we extended error estimation and adaptation to steady-state problems requiring trim constraints; (5) we extended steady-state output methods to time-dependent problems, using unsteady discrete adjoints; (6) we implemented mesh deformation and applied output error estimation and order adaptation to simulations on deformable domains; (7); we developed an unsteady entropy-adjoint indicator for mesh refinement without engineering-output adjoints. The findings were disseminated in a variety of presentations, conference proceedings, and archival journal publications.

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Archival Publications (published) during reporting period:

M. A. Ceze and K. J. Fidkowski. An anisotropic hp-adaptation framework for functional prediction. American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics Journal, 51:492–509, 2013.

M. A. Ceze and K. J. Fidkowski. Drag prediction using adaptive discontinuous finite elements. AIAA Journal of Aircraft, 51(4):1284–1294, 2014.

K. Fidkowski. High-order output-based adaptive methods for steady and unsteady aerodynamics. In H. Deconinck and R. Abgrall, editors, 37th Advanced CFD Lectures series; Von Karman Institute for Fluid Dynamics (December 9–12, 2013). von Karman Institute for Fluid Dynamics, 2013.

K. J. Fidkowski, M. A. Ceze, and P. L. Roe. Entropy-based drag error estimation and mesh adaptation in two dimensions. AIAA Journal of Aircraft, 49(5):1485–1496, September-October 2012.

K. J. Fidkowski and Y. Luo. Output-based space-time mesh adaptation for the compressible Navier-Stokes equations. Journal of Computational Physics, 230:5753–5773, 2011.

S. M. Kast and K. J. Fidkowski. Output-based mesh adaptation for high order Navier-Stokes simulations on deformable domains. Journal of Computational Physics, 252(1):468–494,2013.

Z. Wang, K. Fidkowski, R. Abgrall, F. Bassi, D. Caraeni, A. Cary, H. Deconinck, R.

Hartmann, K. Hillewaert, H. Huynh, N. Kroll, G. May, P.-O. Persson, B. van Leer, and M. Visbal. High-order CFD methods: Current status and perspective. International Journal for Numerical Methods in Fluids, 2013. DOI: 10.1002/fld.3767

Changes in research objectives (if any):

Change in AFOSR Program Manager, if any:

Extensions granted or milestones slipped, if any:

A 7-month extension was granted from the original end-date of May 14, 2014 to December 14, 2014 due to personnel acquisition delays.

AFOSR LRIR Number

LRIR Title

Reporting Period

Laboratory Task Manager

Program Officer

Research Objectives

Technical Summary

Funding Summary by Cost Category (by FY, $K)

	Starting FY	FY+1	FY+2
Salary			
Equipment/Facilities			
Supplies			
Total			

Report Document

Report Document - Text Analysis

Report Document - Text Analysis

Appendix Documents

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